

## Outreach loss may hit valley students

By CHERI CARLSON  
MERCED SUN-STAR

*Last Updated: January 15, 2004, 06:04:02 AM PST*

MERCED -- As the San Joaquin Valley's first University of California campus takes root here, some school officials say cuts in the governor's budget proposal may lessen the odds that valley students will be able to attend.

Historically, the UC admission rate for valley students has lagged behind the state average by 50 percent. However, in recent years, school administrators say, outreach programs at high schools and middle schools have increased valley students' UC eligibility.

Now, Gov. Schwarzenegger, in attempting to reduce California's multibillion dollar budget deficit, has proposed cutting all funding for UC outreach.

"It would be a shame to build a university in Merced and have our students not prepared to enroll there," Golden Valley High School Principal Ralf Swenson said Tuesday.

State Sen. Jeff Denham, R-Merced, referred to outreach as "basically marketing," and said now is not the time to spend money on it -- because the state's universities are poised to start turning away students.

Jorge Aguilar, director of UC's Center for Educational Partnerships in Fresno, responded: "You have to think about outreach as a long-term effort to increase eligibility. You can't look at outreach and see just this budget year."

The governor has proposed eliminating all remaining state funding -- about \$33.3 million -- for the programs, which work with kindergarten through 12th-grade schools and students to improve academic performance and college preparation.

The state cut 50 percent of the outreach money last year, and a mid-year cut took an additional \$12.2 million from this year's budget.

**High school programs at stake**

At the Center for Educational Partnerships, the cuts would mean the loss of funding for such efforts as the UC Scholars Early Academic Outreach Program, which has about 2,200 participating valley students.

The program, which targets middle and high school students, provides counseling, mentoring and field trips to better prepare participants for university enrollment.

At Livingston Middle School, Principal Filomena Sousa said children meet monthly with UC outreach counselors to learn about the university and what students must achieve to be accepted.

Sometimes UC students past and present join in, and give younger students a connection to a university education.

"The goal is to get more kids eligible showing them that you can attain this, especially if you plan and make the right choices, can help," she said.

Merced's Hoover Middle School also participates in the UC Scholars program, and Principal Nolan Harris said he thinks it provides youth with a sense of purpose.

"How well they do in middle school helps determine what they will take in high school and that determines (if) they will go to college," he said.

Livingston High School Assistant Principal Bob Abraham said the city's socioeconomic standing presents one obstacle for students from gaining university educations. Another is the tendency of people to stay in Livingston after being raised there.

But, he said, the UC Scholars program has assisted in increasing the number of Livingston High School graduates accepted at UC campuses, he said.

Last year, the high school had 14 students accepted into the UC system, according to Abraham. The high school usually has an average of about eight of its 246-student senior class accepted to UC campuses.

Abraham said that his high school is already trying to figure out how its guidance program might be able to pick up some aspects of UC outreach on campus. But, he said, the school will not be able to do it all.

**Article found on [www.modbee.com](http://www.modbee.com)**